

Explaining CRISPR gene editing to beginners is no easy task

[MIT grad student Avery] Normandin was surrounded by an entirely different kind of laypeople. These folks — or at least some of them — were hoping to try gene editing for themselves. There was an IT consultant from Hong Kong. There was a former teacher who'd joined a community lab in Southern California. There was a high schooler from Thailand. There was a sculptor from Baltimore, who'd recently started exploring biomaterials.

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They'd all flocked to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for a three-day summit of biohackers from around the world.

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Now Normandin was going to give the beginners among them an insider's look into how [CRISPR] actually works. He'd envisioned leading the group through an experiment on *E. coli*, but as he explained later, "I never want researchers — at any level — to be 'driving blind.' Context is crucial!"

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"That's a gross, globular protein," he said, drawing a blob to represent the bacteria's enzymatic weapon.

"I'm kind of lost," said the former teacher.

"Come closer," Normandin replied. "You're going to draw it for us. Here's a marker."

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Normandin erased the whiteboard with his hands, marker staining his fingers blue and green. He started drawing some genomes from scratch. "Gosh, this is the hardest thing I've ever done," he said, smiling.

Read full, original post: [CRISPR is supposed to be easy. Try explaining it to a gaggle of beginner biohackers](#)